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## SOME ASPECTS OF RABBINIC THEOLOGY.

## II.

IN my last article I tried to show that terms of space in application to God, with which we occasionally meet in Talmudic literature, did not suggest to the Rabbis that God was confined to one particular region. Such a locally limited conception of the Deity could, according to them, only be entertained by a newly-fledged proselyte, who had not as yet emancipated himself from polytheistic notions. To the Jew, God was at one and the same time above, beyond, and within the world, its soul and its life. "Jethro," say the Rabbis, "still believing that there was some substance in other gods, said, 'I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods' (Exod. xv. 11). Naaman came nearer the truth (though still confining God to one part of the universe), for he said, 'Now I know that there is *no other* God in all the *earth* but in Israel' (2 Kings v. 15). Rahab made even further progress, and placed God both in heaven and earth, saying, 'For the Lord your God he is God in *heaven above* and in the *earth beneath*' (Jos. ii. 11); but Moses made him fill all the universe, as it is said, 'The Lord is God in the heaven above and upon the earth beneath; there is none else' (Deut. iv. 39), which means that even empty space is full of God."<sup>1</sup> Nor were, as we have seen, the various foreign philosophical appellatives for the holy name permitted by the Rabbis to intrude between man and his God. What-

<sup>1</sup> *Deut. Rabbah*, II. ; cp. *Mechilta*, 59a. There is probably missing that part of the sentence in which the heathen or the proselyte confines God to heaven. The author of the *שיר היחוד* thus expresses the thought of the ubiquity of God *ולפני הכל כל היית ובהיות הכל כל מלאך*.

ever meaning the subtle Hellenist might attach to them, the relation between the creature and his Maker remained in Israel the same, whether they addressed him as Lord, God, Almighty, or as heaven, space, ubiquity. In fact, as I have pointed out, when the Rabbis were taught by experience that these terms meant for superficial proselytes only a reflex of their former deities, they not only abandoned them for a time, but substituted for them the tetragrammaton itself; a strong measure, taken in contradiction to ancient custom and tradition, and proving their eager anxiety that nothing should intervene between man and God.

I shall now proceed to show how still more intimate and close was the relation maintained and felt between God and Israel. He is their God, their father, their strength, their shepherd, their hope, their salvation, their safety, their heart; they are his people, his children, his first-born son, his treasure, dedicated to his name, which it is sacrilege to profane. In a word, there is not a single endearing epithet in the language, such as brother, sister, bride, mother, lamb, or eye, which is not according to the Rabbis, applied by the Scriptures to express this intimate relation between God and his people.<sup>1</sup>

This intimacy of relationship is quite reciprocal. "One God through Israel, and one Israel through God." They are his selected people, and he is their selected portion.<sup>2</sup> "God is the help and the support of all mankind, but still more so of Israel." "They recognised in him the King, and he recognised in them the masters of the world . . .

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<sup>1</sup> This feature is so strongly represented in the Rabbinic literature, that I must satisfy myself with a few general references. See *Sifra* (ed. Weiss), 44c; *Meehilta*, 28a, 29b, 41b, 43b, 44a, 57a, 62b; *Pesihta* B, 1a and b, 4a and b, 47a and b, 50a, 104a, 157a; *Gen. Rabbah*, LXXXI.; *Exod. Rabbah*, XV., XX., XXVII., XXXIII., LII.; *Lev. Rabbah*, II. See also *Sifre*, 68a, בני אברהם יצחק ויעקב שנקראו אחים . . . וכל לשון חבה. The Targum to the Song of Songs is permeated by the same tendency.

<sup>2</sup> *Sifre*, 134b.

Israel declares (his unity) in the words, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is *one*' (Deut. vi. 4); and the holy spirit (or word of God) proclaims their election (in the words), 'And who is like thy people Israel, a nation that is one (or alone) in the earth' (1 Chron. xvii. 21)."<sup>1</sup> "He glorified them when he said, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born,' whilst they sang a song unto him in Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

"He who rises up against Israel rises up against God; hence the cause of Israel is the cause of God; their ally is also his."<sup>3</sup> For God suffers with them in their suffering and is with them in their distress.<sup>4</sup> Their subjection implies his subjection,<sup>5</sup> and his presence accompanies them through their captivities among the Gentiles.<sup>6</sup> Therefore their redemption is his redemption,<sup>7</sup> their joy is his joy,<sup>8</sup> their salvation his salvation,<sup>9</sup> and their light his light.<sup>10</sup> Their cause is indeed so closely identified with God's cause that on the occasion of the great historical crisis at the Red Sea, God is supposed rather to resent the lengthy prayer of Moses, and says unto him, "Wherefore criest thou to me? (Exodus xiv. 15.) I need no asking for my children, as it is said: 'Wilt thou ask me concerning my children?'" (Isaiah xlv. 11.)<sup>11</sup> The filial relationship suffers no interference, whether for good or evil, of a third person between Israel and God. According to another explanation, Moses was given to understand that there was no need for his prayers, the Holy One by

<sup>1</sup> See *Mechilta*, 36b; *Chagiga*, 3a and b, and parallels. Cp. Bacher, *Agadah d. Tannaiten*, I., 235, and Levy's *Talmud. Wörterbuch*, under *אמירה*, II., and *הטיבה*.

<sup>2</sup> *Mechilta*, 35b.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 39a and b; *Sifre*, 29b and parallels.

<sup>4</sup> *Pesikta* B., 47a. By Israel is also meant the individual. See *Mechilta* 17a and 119b, *אין לי אלא צרת ציבור צרת יחיד כנן*, etc. Cp. *Sabbath*, 12b.

<sup>5</sup> *Mechilta*, 16a.

<sup>6</sup> *Sifre*, 62b; *Pesikta*, B., 113b. Cp. Bacher, *Agadah der Tannaiten*, I., 283, note 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Mechilta*, 16a.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 56a.

<sup>9</sup> *Lev. Rabbah*, IX.

<sup>10</sup> See *Pesikta*, B., 144b.

<sup>11</sup> See *Mechilta*, 30a. Cp. *Num. Rabbah*, XXI.

his intimate relation to Israel being almost himself in distress.<sup>1</sup> Some parallel to this strong confidence in the identity of Israel's cause and God's—strongly reminding us of the bold language of the early mystics, "he needs us even as we need him"<sup>2</sup> — may be found in an utterance of Luther when anxiously waiting for news from the Diet at Augsburg. "I know," he was overheard saying, or rather praying, "that thou art our father and our God; I am certain, therefore, that thou art about to destroy the persecutors of thy children. If thou doest this not, then our danger is thine too. This business is wholly thine. We come to it under compulsion. Thou, therefore, defend."<sup>3</sup>

This paternal relation, according to the great majority of the Rabbis, is unconditional. Israel will be chastised for its sins, even more severely than other nations for theirs; but this is only another proof of God's fatherly love. For it was only through suffering that Israel obtained the greatest gifts from heaven,<sup>4</sup> and what is still more important to note is, that it was affliction which "reconciled and attached the son to the father (Israel to God)."<sup>5</sup> "The Israelites are God's children even when full of blemishes," and the words (Is. i. 4), "A seed of evil doers, children that are corrupt," is cited as a proof that even corruption cannot entirely destroy the natural relation between father and child.<sup>6</sup> The only opponent of this view is R. Judah, who limits this relation to the time when Israel acts as children should act.<sup>7</sup> When R. Akiba, in a time of great distress, opened the public service with the formula, "Our father, our king, we have sinned before thee; our father, our king,

<sup>1</sup> *Mechilta*, 29b, in the name of R. חנינה בן חלניסי.

<sup>2</sup> See the preface of the Bishop of Durham (p. xi.), to the volume, "Lombard Street in Lent."

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Mr. Beard in his *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> See *Berachoth*, 5a, and *Exod. Rabbah*, I.

<sup>5</sup> *Sifre*, 73b. Cp. *Midrash Tillim*, XCVI.

<sup>6</sup> *Sifre*, 133a and b.

<sup>7</sup> *Sifre*, 94a. Cp. *Kiddushin*, 36a.

forgive us," he only expressed the view of the great majority, that Israel may claim their filial privileges even if they have sinned.<sup>1</sup> (A period of distress naturally turns the soul to thought of sin.) Another consequence of this fatherly relation is that Israel feels a certain ease and delight in the fulfilment of the Law which to slaves is burdensome and perplexing. For "the son who serves his father serves him with joy, saying, 'Even if I do not entirely succeed (in carrying out his commandments), yet, as a loving father, he will not be angry with me;' whilst the gentile slave is always afraid lest he may commit some fault, and therefore serves God in a condition of anxiety and confusion."<sup>2</sup>

The preceding quotations should, as I think, suffice to finally demolish the foolish fable of the transcendentalism of the Jewish God, and the despair of the Rabbis to reach him. They have also prepared us to deal here with the notion of the election of Israel by God, which itself is only another term for this special relation between the two, and may be said to assume in the Jewish consciousness the character of an unformulated dogma.<sup>3</sup> In a future essay I hope to discuss the reasons assigned by the Rabbis for their belief in the election of Israel. In this place I only desire to point out that this belief did not make the creed of the Rabbis of such an exclusive nature as is com-

<sup>1</sup> *Taanith*, 26b. Cp. ד"ר to this passage and Baer's remarks in his edition of the Prayer Book (Redelheim, 1868) אבינו מלכינו.

<sup>2</sup> *Tanchuma* נח, § 19. Israel's relation to God seems only then to assume the aspect of slavery, when the whole nation is determined to apostatise. Then God enforces his mastership over them by the right of possession. This seems to me the meaning of the rather obscure passage in *Exod. Rabb.* XXIV., § 1, למה קנך, ד"א אדם אביך למה קנך. Cp. *ibid.*, III., § 6, where a distinction is made between the individual and the greater numbers of Israel, to the former free action being left, which contains undoubtedly a deep historical truth. See also *Sifra*, 112b.

<sup>3</sup> See Weiss, *History of Tradition*, III., 301. Cp. also Prof. Kaufmann's note in this REVIEW, II., 442.

monly believed. For along with this conception of Israel's importance, Judaism has always entertained other convictions, supplying it with universal elements, greatly modifying and expanding the particularism of the "election" dogma.

The Rabbinic belief in the election of Israel finds, perhaps, its clearest expression in a prayer which begins as follows:—"Thou hast chosen us from all peoples; thou hast loved us and taken pleasure in us, and hast exalted us above all tongues; thou hast sanctified us by thy commandments and brought us near unto thy service; O our King, thou hast called us by thy great and holy name." These words, which still breathe a certain Scriptural air, are based, as may be easily seen, on the Biblical passages of Deut. x. 15, xiv. 2; Ps. cxlix. 2; and Jer. xiv. 27.<sup>1</sup> But it is only the privilege of the first-born which the Rabbis claim for Israel, that they are the first in God's kingdom, not the exclusion of other nations. A God "who had faith in the world when he created it,"<sup>2</sup> who mourned over its moral decay, which compelled him to punish it with the deluge, as a father mourns over the death of his son, and who, but for their sins, longed to make his abode among its inhabitants,<sup>4</sup> is not to be supposed to have entirely given up all relations with the great majority of mankind, or to have ceased to take any concern in their well-being. "Though his goodness, loving-kindness and mercy are with Israel, his right hand is always stretched forward to receive *all* those who come into the world, . . . as it is said, Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Is. xlv. 23). For this confession from the Gentiles the Holy One is waiting.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it did not escape the composers of the Liturgy that the same prophet

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<sup>1</sup> See Baer's remark, as above, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> *Sifre*, 132b.

<sup>3</sup> *Gen. Rabbah*, XXVII. Cp. *Synhedrin*, 108a.

<sup>4</sup> *Pesikta J.*, 27b., and parallels.

<sup>5</sup> *Mechilta*, 38b. Cp. *Midrash Tillim*, C., at the beginning.

by whom they established their claim of the election called God, "the King of the Gentiles" (Jer. x. 7), and on this the Rabbis remark that God said to the prophet, "Thou callest me the King of the Gentiles. Am I not also the King of Israel?"<sup>1</sup> The seeming difference again between (Jer. xxxii. 27), "I am the Lord, the God of *all* flesh," and (*ibid.*, verse 15) "the Lord of hosts, *the God of Israel*," or between Exod. xxiii. 17, "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before *the Lord God*," and another passage enjoining the same law, but where God is called "the Lord God, the God of Israel" (*ibid.* xxxiv. 23), is explained by the Rabbis to indicate the double relation of God to the world in general, and to Israel in particular. He is the Lord of all nations, while his name is especially attached to Israel.<sup>2</sup> Of more importance is the interpretation given to Deut. vi. 4, "Hear, O Israel," etc. (the *Shema*), which runs as follows:—"He is *our* God by making his name particularly attached to us; but he is also the one God of *all* mankind. He is *our* God in this world, he will be the only God in the world to come, as it is said, And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord and his name one" (Zech. xiv. 9).<sup>3</sup> For, "in this world, the creatures, through the

<sup>1</sup> *Midrash Tullim*, XCII.

<sup>2</sup> See *Mechilta*, 102a, and *Sifre*, 73a. The text is in a rather corrupt state. I have partly followed here the text of the *Midrash Haggadol*, which on Exod. xxxiv. 24 reads: — את פני האדון אדון אני על כל באי עולם. י יכול אף אתה כיוצא בהן ת"ל אלהי ישראל יכול עליך בלבד ת"ל את פני האדון ה' . הא כיצד אלוה אני על כל באי עולם ושמי יחול עליך. Friedmann's suggestion (in *Mech.*, *ibid.*, note 156) that the original explanation was in כי תשא (not משפטים), is thus confirmed, though of course the *Mechilta* of the compiler of the *Midrash Haggadol* is not the same as ours. In Deut. vi. 4, the same MS. has כיצא כו אמר ה' צבאות אלהי ישראל מה אני צריך והלא כבר נאמר הנה אני ה' אלהי כל בשר, *both* verses taken from Jeremiah.

<sup>3</sup> See *Mechilta* and *Sifre*, *ibid.* I followed the reading of the לקח טוב to Deut. vi. 4, which seems to me to be the best one, and is also supported by quotations in MSS. Cp. also the commentaries of Rashi, Aben Ezra, Nachmanides and Bachya to this verse.



insinuations of the evil inclination, have divided themselves into various tongues, but in the world to come they will agree with one consent to call only on his name, as it is said, 'For then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent' " (Zeph. iii. 9).<sup>1</sup> Thus the *Shema* not only contains a metaphysical statement (about the unity of God), but expresses a hope and belief—for everything connected with this verse has a certain dogmatic value—in the ultimate universal Kingdom of God.

And here it will be desirable to consider the idea of the kingdom of God (or of heaven) in its main features.

It may be viewed from two different aspects, the invisible kingdom and the visible kingdom.

The invisible kingdom is mainly spiritual, and possesses a more individual character. "He who is desirous to receive upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, let him first prepare his body,<sup>2</sup> wash his hands, lay his *Tephilin*, read the *Shema*, and say his prayers." Should he happen to be on a journey, then, for the purpose of receiving the yoke of the kingdom, he must "stop still and direct his heart to heaven in awe, trembling, and devotion, and (in the thought) of unifying the Name, and so read the *Shema*"; after which he may say the rest of the prayers on his way.<sup>3</sup> Communion with God by means of prayer and through the removal of all intruding elements between man and his Maker, through the implicit acceptance of God's unity as well as an unconditional surrender of mind and

<sup>1</sup> *Tanchuma* 77, § 19, and *Tanchuma*, ed. Buber, I., 28b, the source of which is the *Sifre*. See Rashi's commentary, just referred to, where also the verse in Zephaniah is cited.

<sup>2</sup> *Berachoth*, 14b, 15a. The cleansing here has nothing to do with priestly ablutions; it means simply to prepare oneself in such a way as to be able to concentrate all one's mind during the prayer without any disturbance. Cp. Jerushalmi, *Berachoth*, 4c.

<sup>3</sup> *Tanchuma* 77, § 1. Cp. *Tanchuma*, B., I., 29a, text and notes.

heart to his holy will, which the love of God expressed in the *Shema* implies, this is what is understood by the receiving of the kingdom of God. "What is the section of the Law where there is to be found the acceptance of the kingdom of heaven to the exclusion of the worship of idols?" ask the Rabbis. The answer given is, "This is the *Shema*."<sup>1</sup> But under the word "idols" are included all other beings besides God. "Some nations confess their allegiance to Michael, others to Gabriel; but Israel chose only the Lord: as it is said, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul'" (Lam. iii. 24). This is the meaning of "Hear, O Israel," etc.<sup>2</sup> The *Shema* also implies the exclusion of any human mediator, Israel desiring, whether on earth or in heaven, none but God.<sup>3</sup> What love of God means we learn from the interpretation given to the words, "And thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. vi. 5). "Love God with all thy desires, even the evil desire (that is to say, make thy earthly passions and fleshly desires instrumental in the service of God), so that there may be no corner in thy heart divided against God." Again, "Love him with thy heart's last drop of blood, and be prepared to give up thy soul for God, if he requires it. Love him under all conditions, both in times of bliss and happiness, and in times of distress and misfortune."<sup>4</sup> For every measure he metes out to thee, praise and thank him exceedingly."<sup>5</sup> In a similar way the words, "To love the Lord your God" (Deut. xi. 13), are explained to mean: "Say not, I will study the Torah with the purpose of being called Sage or Rabbi, or to acquire fortune, or to be rewarded for it in the world to come; but do it

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<sup>1</sup> *Sifre*, 34b. Cp. *Berachoth*, 13a. See also *Sifre*, 80a, that this division of the *Shema* addresses itself to the individual, ליהרר.

<sup>2</sup> *Deut. Rabbah*, II.

<sup>3</sup> *Deut. R.*, *ibid.*, § 33. Cp. *Agadoth Bereshit*, ch. XXVII.

<sup>4</sup> *Sifre*, 73a. Cp. *Berachoth*, 61b, and parallels.

<sup>5</sup> *Mishnah Berachoth*, IX. 5.

for the sake of love to God, though the glory will come in the end."<sup>1</sup>

The yoke of this kingdom was not felt as a burden. If the Rabbis had any dread, it was lest it might be removed from them. "I shall not hearken unto you," said one of them to his disciples, who on a certain joyous occasion, wanted him to avail himself of his legal privilege and omit the saying of the *Shema*; "I will not remove from me the yoke of the kingdom of heaven even for a single moment."<sup>2</sup> Even to be under the wrath of this yoke is a bliss. When one Rabbi quoted the verse from Ezekiel: "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and with a stretched-out arm and with fury poured out, will I be king over you" (xx. 33), his colleague answered, "If this be the consequence of his anger, we can only wish that the Merciful should be always angry with us."<sup>3</sup> What the typical Rabbi longed for was for that sublime moment when the daily professions of a long life might be confirmed by fact. When R. Akiba, who died the death of a martyr, was in the hands of his torturers, he joyfully "received upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven (by reciting the *Shema*). When asked why he did so, he answered, 'All my life I have recited this verse ("And thou shalt love," etc.), and have longed for the hour when I could fulfil it. I loved him with all my heart, I loved him with all my fortunes. Now I have the opportunity to love him with all my soul. Therefore I repeat this verse in joyfulness.' And thus he died."<sup>4</sup> There is no indication of despair in Akiba's death, but also no thought of a crown of martyrdom awaiting him for this glorious act.<sup>5</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> *Sifre*, 79b, to be supplemented and corrected by the parallel, 84b. Cp. *Nedarim*, 62a.

<sup>2</sup> Mishnah *Berachoth*, II., 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Synhedrin*, 105a.

<sup>4</sup> See Jerushalmi, *Berachoth*, 14b. מִיתָרִין means probably tortured, and has to be supplied by the parallel from Babli, *Berachoth*, 61b.

<sup>5</sup> The words in *Aboth*, iv. 7, "Make not (of the Torah) a crown," are

simply fulfils a commandment of love, and he rejoices in fulfilling it. It is "a love unto death,"<sup>1</sup> suffering no separation. "Though God," says Israel, "brings me into distress and embitters me, he shall lie betwixt my breasts,"<sup>2</sup> and to be always in contact with the object of his love is Israel's constant prayer. "Unite our hearts," runs an old Rabbinic prayer, "to fear thy name; remove us from all thou hatest, and bring us near to all thou lovest, and be merciful unto us for thy name's sake."<sup>3</sup> Even fear is only another expression with them for love. "I feared in my joy, I rejoiced in my fear, and my love prevailed over all."<sup>4</sup>

Still more distinctly, though not more emphatically, is this thought of the constant union with God and the constant love of God expressed in the later Jewish authors, with whom it takes a certain mystical turn. "What is the essence of love to God?" says R. Bachya (who flourished about 1040). "It is the longing of the soul for an immediate union with him, to be absorbed in his superior light. For the soul, being a simple spiritual substance, is naturally attracted towards spiritual beings. And when she becomes aware of any being that could give her added strength and light, she devises means how to reach it, and clings to it in her thought . . . longing and desiring after it. This is the aim of her love. . . . And when the soul has realised God's omnipotence and his greatness, she prostrates herself in dread before his

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explained by R. Samuel de Ozedo, to mean the crown of the saints in the after-life; any thought of reward, whether material or spiritual, whether in this world or in the next, being unworthy of the real worshipper of God. It may of course be questioned whether this was the real meaning of the Tanna's saying; but it is highly characteristic of the feelings of the Talmudical Jew in this respect.

<sup>1</sup> *Mechilta*, 37a.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sabbath*, 88b, on the interpretation of Song of Songs, i. 13. Cp. the Midrash to this passage.

<sup>3</sup> Jerushalmi, *Berachoth*, 7d.

<sup>4</sup> See תה"ב כ"א רבא, III.

greatness and glory, and remains in this state till she receives his assurance, when her fear and anxiety cease. Then she drinks of the cup of love to God. She has no other occupation than his service, no other thought than of him, no other intent than the accomplishment of his will, and no other utterance than his praise. If he deal kindly with her she will thank him, if he bring affliction on her she will submit willingly, and her trust in God and her love of God will always increase. So it was told of one of the saints that he used to rise up in the night and say, "My God, thou hast brought upon me starvation and penury. Into the depth of darkness thou hast driven me, and thy might and strength hast thou taught me. But even if they burn me in fire, only the more will I love thee and rejoice in thee."<sup>1</sup> For so said the prophet, 'And thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart.'"<sup>2</sup> R. Eleasar of Worms (of the 13th century) said, "The root of love to God is that the soul should be tied to him in the bands of love, in joy and gladness of heart; not like one who serves his master under compulsion. And when the obstacles in his way are greatest, love breaks out in flames in his heart, urging him to serve God. . . All his thoughts are with God, all his meditations burn with love to him."<sup>3</sup> An anonymous author (probably about the same period) says, "Those who believe that works are the main thing are mistaken. The most important matter

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<sup>1</sup> Of one of the exiles from Spain, who was exposed by the captain of the vessel in which he had fled with his family on a deserted island, something similar is reported. When his wife died from exhaustion and his two children perished by famine, and he himself was in a fainting state, he exclaimed: "O Lord of the world, great are the afflictions thou hast brought upon me, tempting me to leave the faith. But thou knowest that I shall not solve thy covenant (with us) until death," שְׁאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל, פכ"ג.

<sup>2</sup> חובת הלבבות שער אהבת ה' פ"א.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Eliezer of Worms, ספר האהבה, and רוקח ספר החסידים, § 300. The book רוקח is a casuistic book on questions of the Law. See also Dr. Güdemann, *Culturgeschichte*, I., 160.

is the heart. Work and words are only intended as preparatory actions to the devotion of the heart. The essence of all the commandments is to love God with all the heart. The glorious ones (*i.e.*, the angels) fulfil none of the 613 commandments. They have neither mouth nor tongue, and yet they are absorbed in the glory of God by means of thought."<sup>1</sup>

These instances, which could be multiplied by numerous other extracts from the later devotional literature and hymnology, suffice to show that there are enough individualistic elements in Judaism to satisfy all the longings of the religionist whose bent lies towards mysticism. And just as every Israelite "could always pour out his private griefs and joys before him who fashioneth the hearts,"<sup>2</sup> so he was able to be in perfect communion with his God (who is 'nigh to all them who call upon him') by means of simple love, without the aid of any supposed self-condensation of the deity, which, in spite of all attempts at explanation, is at the bottom nothing else than a pretext for the most undiluted polytheism. Judaism did most excellently well without all these modern theological appliances.

It must, however, be remarked that this satisfying the needs of anybody and everybody, is not the highest aim which Judaism set before itself. Altogether, I venture to think that the now fashionable test of determining the worth of a religion by its capability to supply the various demands of the great market of the believers has something low and mercenary about it. Nothing less than a good old honest heathen pantheon, with beautiful gods, jovial gods, lusty gods, ailing gods, fighting gods, intoxicated gods, male gods, female gods—nothing less than this would satisfy the crazes and cravings of our present

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<sup>1</sup> Communicated by Dr. Güdemann, *Culturgeschichte*, I., 160, from a Munich MS., ספר החיים, emanating, as it seems, from the Franco-German school.

<sup>2</sup> See Prof. Cheyne's *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 319.

pampered humanity, with its pagan reminiscences, its metaphysical confusion of languages and theological idiosyncrasies. No: true religion is above these silly demands. It is not a Jack-of-all-trades, meaning monotheism to the philosopher, pluralism to the crowd, some mysterious Nothing to the agnostic, Pantheism to the poet, service of man to the hero-worshipper. Its mission is just as much to teach the world that there *are* false gods as to bring it nearer to the true one. It means to convert the world, not to convert itself. It will not die in order *not* to live. It disdains a victory by defeating itself in giving up its essential doctrines and its most vital teaching. It has confidence in the world; it hopes, it prays and waits patiently for the great day when the world will be ripe for its acceptance.

Nor is the individual—the pet of modern theology—with his heartburnings and mystical longings, of such importance that Judaism can spend its whole strength on him. Old De Wette may be guilty of some exaggeration when he maintained “that all mysticism tends to a more refined lust, to a feasting upon the feelings”—something like our conceited culture dandy, who is eaten up with the admiration of his vague denials and half-hearted affirmations. For undoubtedly every religion can boast of saintly mystics, who did much good service to their own creed and to the world at large. But in general the mystic has not shown himself very trustworthy in his mission. Instead of being absorbed by God, he has absorbed God in himself. His tendency towards antinomianism, and to regard law and morality as beneath him, is also a sad historic fact. But the worst feature about him is his egoism, the kingdom of God within him never passing beyond the limits of his insignificant self who is the exclusive object of his own devotions. The Rabbis often speak of the reward awaiting the righteous after their death as consisting, not in material pleasures, but in feeding on, or revelling in,

the divine glory.<sup>1</sup> But such a vision "of the blissfulness of the spirit" is wisely confined to the next world, when the Great Sabbath will break upon us, when all things will be at rest. In this world, "the world of activity," the righteous have no such peace; they have to labour and to suffer with their fellow-creatures; and even such a sublime quietism as revelling in God, may, without strong control, too easily degenerate into a sort of religious epicureanism. The best control is to work towards establishing the visible kingdom of God in the present world. This, the highest goal religion can strive to reach, Judaism never lost sight of. It always remained the cherished burden of its most ardent prayers and the object of its dearest hopes.

S. SCHECHTER.

*(To be continued.)*

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*Berachoth, 17a and parallels.*